

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE**  
WASHINGTON, DC

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<h1 style="margin: 0;">FSIS NOTICE</h1>	18-03	5/27/03
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**Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)**  
**Surveillance Program**

**I. PURPOSE**

The information in this notice was issued in FSIS Notice 15-02, dated 5/10/02. That notice expires on 5/31/03. In light of recent events, FSIS is reissuing this information to reiterate to veterinary medical officers (VMOs) that they are to pay particular attention to cattle showing signs of central nervous system (CNS) disorders.

**II. BACKGROUND**

A. Meat and meat products are not allowed to enter into the United States from countries known to have BSE or that may be at high risk for BSE. There has never been a case of BSE found in the United States, due in large part to aggressive prevention and surveillance efforts. BSE is considered to be a reportable disease in the United States. In cooperation with FSIS, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has taken stringent measures in prevention, education, surveillance, and response, including prohibiting since 1989, the importation of live ruminants and most ruminant products from countries where BSE is known to exist. On December 12, 1997, APHIS extended these restrictions to include all of Europe because of concerns about widespread risk factors and inadequate surveillance for BSE. As of December 7, 2000, USDA prohibited all imports of rendered animal protein products, regardless of species, from Europe. This decision followed the determination by the European Union that feed of nonruminant origin was potentially cross-contaminated with the BSE agent.

B. APHIS leads an ongoing, comprehensive, interagency surveillance program for BSE in the United States. APHIS enforces import restrictions and conducts surveillance for BSE to ensure that this serious disease does not become established in this country. The purpose of this notice is to serve as a reminder and clarification of the signs of BSE and the role of FSIS in-plant veterinarians in the BSE surveillance effort.

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<b>DISTRIBUTION:</b> Inspection Offices; T/A Inspectors; Plant Mgt; TRA; ABB; TSC; Import Offices	<b>NOTICE EXPIRES:</b> 6/1/04	<b>OPI:</b> OPPD
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### **III. What are the clinical signs of BSE and how is it diagnosed?**

Affected cattle experience progressive degeneration of the nervous system and may display changes in temperament, abnormal posture, incoordination, decreased milk production, or loss of body weight. There is no validated test to detect the disease in a live animal. Veterinary pathologists confirm BSE by histopathologic and immunohistochemical examination of brain tissue.

### **IV. What is FSIS's role in the surveillance for BSE?**

A. All FSIS VMOs in plants slaughtering adult cattle should remain especially aware of cattle showing signs of CNS disorders. For BSE surveillance, adult cattle are considered to be animals that are 20 months old or greater. When an adult bovine is condemned on antemortem for a CNS disorder (9 CFR part 309.4), the FSIS VMO notifies the area APHIS Veterinary Services office. The FSIS VMO should ensure that all animal identification is documented and remains associated with the carcass. This information will be extremely critical in a trace-back situation should it ever occur.

B. The FSIS VMO is to record the time and date that he or she notified the APHIS Veterinary Services office of the condemnation and the name of the person to whom he or she spoke. The APHIS veterinarian will be responsible for collecting the brain sample and submitting it to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory. Although not expected to assist in sample collection, the FSIS VMO should, to the extent possible, assist APHIS personnel in arrangements at the plant that facilitate sample collection. In the event an APHIS veterinarian is not immediately available, the FSIS VMO should have the establishment save the head, with brain intact, and chill (but do not freeze) the head immediately to reduce postmortem autolysis of the brain. The FSIS VMO should ensure that the condemned carcass has been disposed of in accordance with 9 CFR part 309.13 and ensure that the animal ID is retained with the head. Condemned materials should not be brought into the official establishment.

C. From time to time, an APHIS veterinarian will collect brains from non-ambulatory or downer cattle. It is the responsibility of the APHIS veterinarian to contact plant management and request permission to collect brain samples from this population of cattle. If plant management grants permission to collect brain samples from downer cattle, the APHIS veterinarian will contact the FSIS VMO assigned to the plant to establish sample dates and other details for collection. The FSIS VMO makes the appropriate disposition independently of the sampling by APHIS. The establishment can voluntarily hold the carcass until the sample results have been received.

Refer questions to the Slaughter Operations Staff, Technical Service Center at (402) 221-7400.

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